
Command Post Operations

For a Company Heavy Team at JRTC

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It's 1600 hours, Day 5 in the "Box" during a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation; the main supply route is cleared south of Fullerton landing strip. We have "jumped" our assembly area of more than 60 vehicles for the second time today and are set up half a kilometer southeast of the landing strip. A message is received from our parent brigade, saying there will be a heavy drop in one hour, exactly where we are sitting. The heavy team is relocating again.

Now is not the time for planning; it is time for standing operating procedures (SOPs) to take over and execute.

Effective command post (CP) operations are essential to the success of the heavy team at the JRTC, and their mastery will be a vital aspect of combat

as well. I served as executive officer (XO) for a company (plus) heavy team rotation, which consisted of two Bradley platoons, two tank platoons, an engineer platoon with dozer assets, a support platoon, a fire support team (FIST), a medical section, and two maintenance teams. With all of this under one company commander, it was my mission to act as XO or battle captain, track and support these assets, and serve as a mini-battalion tactical operations center (TOC). The success of the heavy team's mission depends on effective tracking systems, trained shift personnel, established net priorities, SOPs for company command post setup, and most important, flexibility throughout all operations.

An effective tracking system in-

involved three separate working charts:

The first chart included the vehicle status of mission capable vehicles—by type, logistical and personnel requirements, platoon strength, platoon and attachment location, platoon and attachment mission, brigade and battalion TOC locations, frequencies, and challenge and password. This chart was large enough to read easily from a few feet away but small enough to store easily. Having this information allowed for the smooth flow of reporting and easier transition as our unit was task organized under other units and also as we received attachments.

The second chart was a significant-action chart. The format used was an abbreviated SALUTE (size, activity, location, unit, time, and equipment)

Current Disposition

UNITS	TASK ORG ARIN	LOCATION MISSION PERSONNEL OFF/WHEN	SLANT FMC M1/M2/RS	MAINT DOWN	MILES DOWN	REPORTS										STATUS			
						White1	White2	Red3	Red6	Blue1	Amber1	Amber2	Amber3	Amber8	Cdr DRs	Green >80%	Amber >70%	Red <50%	Black <30%
						As Req	0500/ 1700	As Req	0500/ 1800	0500/ 1800	0900	As Req	As Req	As Req	2400	PERS	CL III	CL V	WPHS
RED PLT Callsign: _____			/ /													G A R B	G A R B	G A R B	G A R B
WHITE PLT Callsign: _____			/ /													G A R B	G A R B	G A R B	G A R B
BLUE PLT Callsign: _____			/ /													G A R B	G A R B	G A R B	G A R B
GREEN PLT Callsign: _____			/ /													G A R B	G A R B	G A R B	G A R B
ENG			/ /																
FIST			/ /																
STL WRENCH			/ /																
HEL WRENCH			/ /																
MEDICS			/ /																
64th PSB			/ /																
HQ PLT			/ /																
TMA TOC			2-1 IN TOC																
172 BDE TOC			1/501 BN TOC																
Challenge and Password:						Battle Captain:						NCOIC:							

This significant action chart is an example of the charts used in the CP.

report, placed on a butcher board or dry erase board. This chart helped provide a running estimate to develop the situation, as well as ideas on the current enemy course of action.

The last chart used was an enlarged 1:25,000 map, along with a legend for confirmed or suspected minefield positions, confirmed or suspected enemy positions, and friendly positions. Color-coded tabs were placed in each friendly and enemy element position on the map and updated as the battle progressed and unit locations changed.

A company battle captain needs a well-trained shift crew for efficient decision making. The battle captain's shift consisted of one officer, one non-commissioned officer, and four enlisted men. A battle captain prioritizes what the commander needs to know, tracks the battle, and makes any necessary suggestions to, or decisions for, the commander. A good working relationship with the company team first sergeant and the battle captain or shift NCO is essential. If these leaders compare notes at least once a day, it is much easier to track the flow of casualties and

replacement soldiers. The shift NCO's job is to supervise the three enlisted men and to stand in for the battle captain in his absence. Two of the four soldiers—radiotelephone operators—monitor battalion, company, and administrative/logistical (A/L) radio nets. A third soldier updates the friendly and enemy positions on the map as the battle progresses and provide any necessary graphics on order. The fourth soldier serves as a recorder who keeps the significant actions chart updated, as well as the personnel/log chart.

At the JRTC, the company team must be able to monitor three nets at all times: the company net, the parent unit's net, and a company A/L net. This meant we had to have two vehicles at the CP at all times. Our unit used the first sergeant's M113 and either the FIST vehicle or the engineer platoon leader's M113. The FIST-V is the ideal choice, if the mission allows, because of its three-net capability.

Our unit SOP for the setup of the command post consisted of a frame tent covered by a camouflage net with support system along with two OE-254

antennas. Two M113s were backed into opposite ends of the frame tent with ramps dropped. Field desks were set up, with speaker boxes placed on them, as well as hand mikes for each net. All necessary tracking charts were hung around the frame of the tent.

This CP setup was extremely flexible. It was possible for setup and teardown to be completed in 45 minutes or less. It was also possible to leave the tent and become a mobile CP at a moment's notice. Units need to be able to accomplish this because of the frequency of indirect fire, chemical strikes, and direct fire from enemy air, personnel carriers, and tanks.

To make it more difficult for the enemy to pinpoint our position, our unit would reposition the assembly area daily, eliminating the need to reposition on short notice. This would be done at least once every 24 hours and at most three times in a day, depending on the enemy situation. This turned out to be an effective tactic. The CP was never destroyed by indirect fire, nor did we receive a chemical strike during our time in the maneuver box.

To be successful at the JRTC, a company heavy team needs to establish solid SOPs that involve solid battle tracking systems, trained shift personnel, established net priorities, established tracking systems, trained shift personnel, established net priorities, established command post setup—and most important, the ability to remain flexible throughout the fog of war.

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